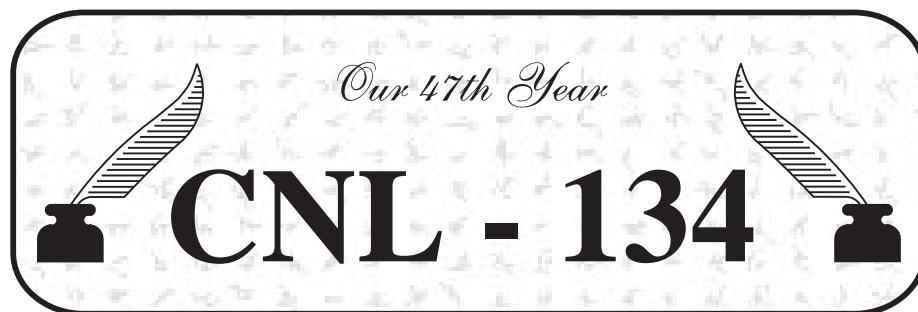


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A Research Journal in Early American Numismatics

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Submitting Material for Publication

We encourage our readers to consider submitting material on early North American numismatics to CNL for publication. In general, this includes coins, tokens, paper money, and medals that were current before the U. S. Federal Mint began operations in 1793. However, there are certain pieces produced after the 1793 date that have traditionally been considered part of pre-Federal numismatics and they should be included. We cover all aspects of study regarding the manufacture and use of these items. Our very knowledgeable and friendly staff will assist potential authors to finalize submissions by providing advice concerning the text and help with illustrations. Submissions, in either electronic or hardcopy format, should be sent to the editor via the e-mail address given in the editorial or through the ANS at the above postal address.



Welcome to our summer 2007 issue. Contained in this issue you will find a variety of subjects. This issue starts with a Letter to the Editor submission. Authors Dr. Roger Moore and Ray Williams explain that one of the questions that went unanswered in their recent paper concerning the ANS copies of the Maris plate-I photograph now has a definitive answer thanks to *CNL* reader W. Philip Keller. See Mr. Keller's letter to Dr. Moore which is reproduced, with permission, following the authors' comments.

Next up is a technical note from David Fanning. This is David's first contribution to *CNL* even though he has been around and involved with numismatics for many years. I asked David to provide a short biographical sketch with the purpose of introducing himself to *CNL* readers. He writes:

I became involved with numismatics as a child, and worked for Fountain Square Stamp and Coin in Cincinnati, Ohio, during high school and early college. After a period away from the hobby (during which I completed graduate studies at the Ohio State University), I began to focus my attention on 19th-century U.S. numismatic literature and the colonial coins and tokens of North America. From 2001 to 2006, I served as editor-in-chief of *The Asylum*, quarterly journal of the Numismatic Bibliomania Society (NBS). Presently I am most interested in New Jersey coppers and the Franco-American colonial issues. I have published articles in several numismatic publications and have received writing awards from the ANA, NBS and NLG.

David writes about his discovery of a new 1767 French Colonies sou counterstamp/variety combination. He references Bob Vlack's work on

this subject which was published in the December 2001 issue of *CNL*.

A reprinted paper by your editor follows. It was originally published in 1988 by Q. David Bowers in *Rare Coin Review* No. 72. The imitation halfpenny reverse die that was used to strike the Vermont "Britannia" copper is studied and the results are presented in this paper. This die was one of the most long-lived dies employed during the state coinage era. It saw use with five different imitation halfpenny dies before being married to the Vermont obverse die. Some researchers have suggested that since it was not a Vermont reverse die it was purposely defaced to look worn before its use with the Vermont obverse die. This study shows that this was not the case but rather the reverse die was heavily worn from use with the various imitation halfpenny obverse dies. A new epilogue has been added to the reprint along with a new plate that illustrates the progressive wear of the reverse die as it was combined with the various obverse dies.

Our final paper discusses the many different counterfeits, forgeries, and facsimiles of Virginia halfpennies. Dr. Roger A. Moore is the principal author of this valuable, in-depth study with assistance from three other Virginia halfpenny enthusiasts; Sydney Martin, Alan Anthony, and William Veach. With the exception of William Veach, all of the authors have previously had material published in *CNL*.

Mr. Veach self-published a total of eight newsletters in the early 1990s under the title of *The Generation Newsletter of The 1773 – Colonial Virginia Copper Halfpenny*. The mission statement of the newsletter was to "Resolve to protect its [the 1773 Virginia halfpenny] historic integrity and to promote its welfare." Within each newsletter, Mr. Veach presented his own research concerning this coinage and fielded questions raised by newsletter readers. In addition to publishing the newsletter he also wrote and self-published a short work of fiction (128 pp.) titled *The Gold Frog (Riddle)* where the storyline centers around Virginia halfpence.

At this point, I would like to mention that Louis Jordan, one of our Associate Editors, recently

had published an excellent overview on colonial paper money. His article was titled "Folding Money" and appeared in the June 2007 issue of the magazine *Early American Life*. The article discusses how paper money got its start in the American Colonies and its use up through the Revolutionary War. Lou presents many interesting facts about individual notes along with color illustrations of these notes.

Finally, I would like to promote an upcoming book titled *The Hibernia Coinage of William Wood (1722 – 1724)*. This book is authored by Sydney Martin and will be published by the Colonial Coin Collectors Club later this year. I was privileged to help proof the manuscript and I can say without hesitation that it is an awesome piece of work. It is one of the most thorough studies in early American numismatics ever produced and it will become the bible on William Wood's Hibernia coinage for decades to come.

Gary Trudgen
gtrudgen@aol.com

LETTER
to the Editor

One of the joys of writing a paper for *CNL* is the knowledge that a large fund of information rests within the readership which is available for clarifying questions and providing untapped insight. The letter from W. Philip Keller concerning the paper, "The American Numismatic Society Copies of the Maris Plate-1 Photograph," which appeared in the April 2007 issue of *CNL*, does this admirably. The authors applaud him for having come forward with important information which clarifies one of the major dilemmas that they encountered while researching the paper – the lack of billing information within the ANS archives for producing the large photographic prints of the Maris NJ photographic plate. Though there is no question that the reproductions produced in the 1950s were developed from a negative taken from a book that has resided within the ANS since 1881, the exact location where the enlargements were made was under question. Mr. Keller's communication from the 1950s resolves this dilemma by conclusively indicating that Richard Picker had the enlargements made at a location outside of the ANS. In addition, the suspicion of the authors that the enlargements of the Maris photographic plate were made as a single large sheet, is confirmed. Individual recipients of the enlargement could retain it as a single sheet, cut it into two parts as described in the authors' paper, or cut it into quadrants, as performed by Mr. Keller.

The authors would like to thank Mr. Keller once again for furnishing the answer to a key unresolved concern surrounding the production of these Maris Plate-1 Photograph reproductions.

Roger Moore and Ray Williams

Note: See the following page for a copy of Mr. Keller's letter.

03 March 2007

Dear Dr. Moore:

Your article, "ANS Copies of the Maris Plate-I Photograph," in the current *The Colonial Newsletter* (CNL-133, pages 3115-3120) brought back some memories of a time long past.

I have a copy of this photograph that I received from Dick Picker.

Near the beginning of my years-long correspondence and friendship with Dick he offered me the Maris plate photograph. Here's how it proceeded:

- RP letter of 17 November 1958:
"...By the way, if you don't have a Maris plate, and would like one, let me know. I've had the plate photographed by a commercial photographer, and he maintains the negatives on file for me. He charges \$5, to make one up, and if you'd like, I can order one for you. It's much better than Gutttag. As a matter of fact, I may still have an extra one or two here. When I first made them, I ordered about a dozen..."
- 29 December 1958: I sent him \$5 for the photograph.
- RP letter of 01 January 1959:
"... The Maris plate will follow as soon as I find something to pack it in. Yes, it is actual size, and that's the problem. I did have some mailing tubes, but they're gone. I probably won't be able to get any until I return from the Florida convention, about the 15th..."
- RP letter of 18 January 1959:
"Well, I'm back from Florida, and it was cold down there. This was my third trip down there, and I still haven't wet my bathing trunks in the Florida waters. I didn't forget about the Maris plates, but still haven't had a chance to get any mailing tubes. I hope to get that done this week sometime..."
- RP letter of 10 February 1959:
"...Did you ever receive the Maris plate?"
- My letter of 22 February 1959:
"...Yes, I received the Maris plate in mid-January in good condition. Neglected to mention it last time..."
- RP letter of 25 February 1959:
"... I am glad that the Maris plate arrived in good condition. The recipient of the last one I sent out tells me that the Post Office took the "fragile" stamp as a challenge and really did a job on it.
- I later cut the plate into quadrants so that it would fit into the sheet protectors in my reference notebook.

Best wishes,



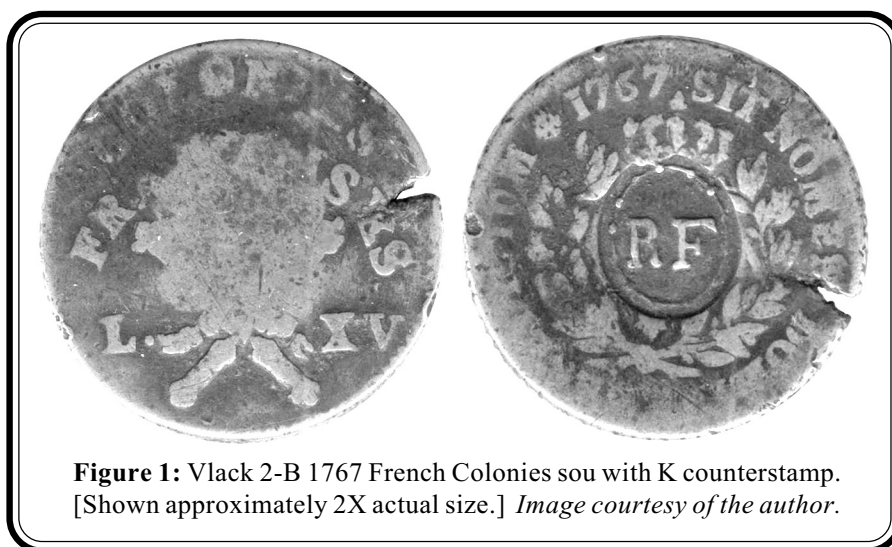
W. Philip Keller

A New Counterstamp/Variety Combination of 1767 French Colonies Sou

by

David F. Fanning, Ph.D.; Columbus, OH

(TN-199)



I recently obtained an example of the 1767 French Colonies sou authorized via the edict of October 1766 and struck at the Paris mint for circulation in the French colonies in the Caribbean. The history of these pieces has been told before,¹ and it is not my intention to restate it. The purpose of this note is simply to introduce a previously unpublished die variety/counterstamp combination in this series.

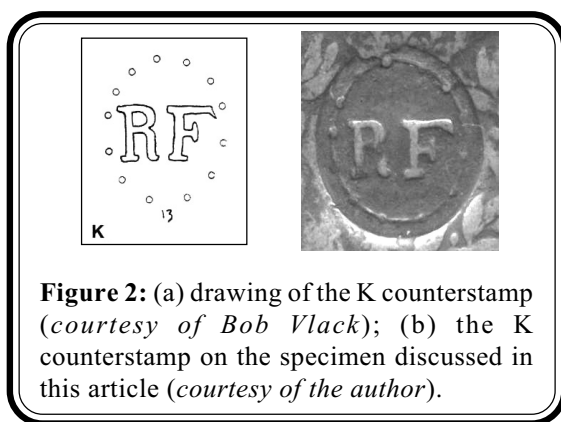
In 2001, Robert Vlack published the final installment of a long-running article in *The Colonial Newsletter* that described all known die varieties of both the coins themselves and the counterstamps that appear on most of them, as well as the combinations in which these counterstamps and die varieties could be found.² There are 21 obverse dies described in the Vlack article, and 14 reverse dies, coming together to form 22 distinct die varieties. In addition, the Vlack article illustrates 15 different counterstamp varieties found on the bulk of these pieces. Combining known die varieties with known counterstamps results in a total of 67 known die variety/counterstamp combinations to be found in this series (including those die varieties found without counterstamps).

The specimen I recently obtained (Figure 1) joins Vlack's obverse 2 with reverse B, a combination he lists in his enumeration. The counterstamp is also listed in the Vlack article,

1 Walter Breen, "Some Neglected Colonials," *CNL*, sequential pages 160-62; Walter Breen, "North American Colonial Coinages under the French Regime (1640-1763)," *Studies on Money in Early America*, Eric P. Newman and Richard G. Doty, eds. (New York: ANS, 1976), pp. 43-74; John J. Ford, Jr., and Doug Ball, "Royal Edict Authorizing the 1767 Colonies Francoises Copper Sous," *CNL*, sequential pages 733-35; Michael Hodder, "An American Collector's Guide to the Coins of Nouvelle France," *Canada's Money*, COAC 8, John Kleeberg, ed. (New York: ANS, 1994), pp. 1-35.

2 Robert Vlack, "The French Colonies Sou of 1767: A Summary and Final Installment – Part VII," *CNL*, sequential pages 2285-99, Dec 2001. The earlier installments of Vlack's series on this subject appear in *CNL* sequential pages 39-40, 46-47, 56-57, 68-70, 133-35, and 177-78.

where he gives it the appellation of counterstamp K, one of only two counterstamps in which 13 dots form the oval surrounding RF (Figure 2). In the chart accompanying the Vlack article that indicates which counterstamp varieties are found with which die varieties, however, this particular combination is not to be found. Hence, the Vlack 2-B sou with counterstamp K is a new die variety/counterstamp combination, the 68th of the series.



The author would like to thank Bob Vlack for his comments on this coin, and Phil Mossman for putting me in touch with Vlack.

The Illogical and Curious Vermont “Britannia” Copper

by

Gary A. Trudgen; Vestal, NY

(G15)

This article was first published in 1988 by Bowers & Merena Galleries, Inc. in *Rare Coin Review No. 72*.
Reprinted with permission.



High-grade Vermont “BRITANNIA” copper (Bressett 17-V, Ryder-13, Vlack VT-87C) illustrating the typical reverse die condition. [Shown 2X actual size.] *Photo courtesy of Neil Rothschild; Siboni Collection.*

One of the most popular and interesting coins from the state coinage era is the Vermont “BRITANNIA” copper. It is part of the Vermont copper coinage series and also belongs to the Atlee imitation British halfpence series. In the Vermont series it has been attributed as Bressett 17-V and Ryder 13, while in the Atlee halfpence series it is known as Vlack VT-87C. The Vermont “BRITANNIA” copper is a mule or a coin struck from dies belonging to two different coinage series. The obverse die bears the Latin legend VERMON AUCTORI (By authority of Vermont), and was specifically engraved for the Vermont coinages. The reverse die, dated 1787, carries the legend BRITANNIA, and was originally engraved for use with American-made imitation British halfpence.

The obverse of the coin is usually well struck. The reverse of the coin is always weakly struck along the periphery. Only high-grade and well-struck early issues of this variety show enough of the reverse legend so that it is readable. Even then, the tops of most of the letters are still missing. The date is usually entirely gone, and at best only the last two digits, 87, will faintly show. The only part of the reverse that is normally well struck is the seated figure of Britannia, although her right leg and the globe that she sits on are always missing.

This illogical and curious copper was minted by Machin’s Mills in the state of New York during the Confederation period of the United States. Machin’s Mills is one of the most interesting early American mints, and the Vermont “BRITANNIA” copper is one of their most interesting products. No coinage records are known to exist from Machin’s Mills, but a study of the halfpence that were struck with the same reverse die suggests that the Vermont “BRITANNIA” was struck in 1788. Fortunately, this fascinating copper is one of the most common state issues so anyone desiring a specimen can obtain one.

Over the years a controversy has arisen concerning the reverse die. Was the die worn out from previous use or was it deliberately defaced to remove the legend and date? In either case, it is argued that the lack of the BRITANNIA legend would have made these coins more acceptable for circulation. A review of some of the earlier writings concerning the Vermont "BRITANNIA" reveals how the controversy developed.

In 1886 Wyllys Betts published his ground-breaking treatise on counterfeit copper coins manufactured by the American mints. Within his study, titled *Counterfeit Half Pence Current in the American Colonies and Their Issue from the Mints of Connecticut and Vermont*, the following paragraph is found on page 16:

Now, comparing the half pennies of 1787 (No. 6) with Vermont coin (No. 17) having the reverse BRITANNIA, I find in several of them the identical die (No. 18), used with several obverse dies. One in my possession shows both dies in good condition. A second impression, though as fine as when struck, show the same dies much worn, and the reverse die shows the weakness around the edge always existing in the reverse of the "BRITANNIA" Vermont cent, showing that the die was worn out in striking halfpence before its use began with the Vermont obverse.

The numbers within the parentheses refer to very accurate line drawings of the coins illustrated in Betts's paper. No. 6 is Vlack-19 halfpenny obverse; No. 17 is the Vermont "BRITANNIA" obverse; and No. 18 is the Vlack VT-87C halfpenny reverse die which is also known as Bressett V within the Vermont series.

Hillyer Ryder authored *The Colonial Coins of Vermont* in 1919. He described each of the Vermont copper die varieties known to him and assigned a number to each variety. The Vermont "BRITANNIA" variety was assigned number 13, and the reverse die is described as follows:

The reverse die is so badly worn, that the date does not show. Specimens of counterfeit British halfpence may readily be found showing this reverse in fine condition.

In 1942 two articles titled "Connecticut and Vermont Coppers of the British Type" were published in *The Numismatist* by Howard Kurth. They appeared in the February and July issues. In his first article, in the next to the last paragraph, Kurth discusses the reverse die of the Vermont "BRITANNIA" copper. He speculates: "As a makeshift emergency, or to save the trouble of making a new die, one of "BRITANNIA" dies might have been used to serve as a Vermont obverse. This theory would be substantiated if a counterfeit British halfpence could be found struck with the same reverse die."

When he wrote the first article Kurth apparently was not aware of Ryder's or Betts's information which stated that the Vermont "BRITANNIA" reverse die was indeed found used with counterfeit halfpenny. After the first article was published, he acquired an imitation British halfpenny in Fine condition that was struck with the same reverse die, and he also became aware of Ryder's information. In his follow-up article, after comparing the poor condition of the reverse die when used to strike the Vermont "BRITANNIA" versus the good condition of the die when used to strike the counterfeit halfpenny, he writes:

After making this comparative study, we are more than ever convinced that the invariably "poor" condition of the BRITANNIA reverse, when found in combination with the Vermont obverse, is not due to wear. Observe the relative sharpness of the lettering and date when the same die was combined with its original mate – the George III obverse. For some reason or other, probably economy, it was decided to make this fine reverse die serve in the striking of coppers for Vermont. To make the new marriage more compatible than it otherwise would be, some attempt was

apparently made to obliterate the word "BRITANNIA" by abrading the die with a file. Naturally, other shallow parts of the die suffered from this rather harsh operation. Britannia's left knee and the globe on which she was seated were entirely erased. The date, too, was almost completely obliterated, though whether this was intentional or not we do not know.

Further down in the next paragraph he also writes:

If this condition (the Poor condition of the Vermont "BRITANNIA" reverse) were due to wear of the die, as previously supposed, then specimens would be found showing various more moderate stages of wear.

John Richardson updated the Vermont copper varieties in 1947. His article titled "The Copper Coins of Vermont" contained a foreword by Howard Kurth and was published in *The Numismatist*. His description of the reverse die of the Vermont "BRITANNIA" follows:

The reverse is always found in poor condition, the date not showing, and the legend indistinguishable. It was once thought that this was owing to a badly worn die, but now it is generally believed to have been an actual mutilation purposely done to destroy the effect of belonging to the reverse of a counterfeit British halfpenny which it originally did.

Finally in Kenneth Bressett's modern study of the Vermont copper coinage he takes the middle of the road when discussing the reverse die of the Vermont "BRITANNIA" copper. His study, titled "Vermont Copper Coinage," was published in 1976 as part of the American Numismatic Society's *Studies on Money in Early America*. He labels the die as reverse V and describes it as follows:

Very large seated figure with breasts partially exposed. Date below single line. Legend and date always weak, as these features were either worn or intentionally removed from the die. In late state a massive die crack covers left half of date area, and a heavy flaw runs from head to second N.

A summary of what has been written concerning the controversy surrounding the Vermont "BRITANNIA" reverse die indicates the following:

1. Betts concluded that the die was worn out from striking counterfeit halfpence before it was combined with the Vermont obverse. He arrived at this conclusion because he had counterfeit halfpence in his possession struck from the Vermont "BRITANNIA" reverse die in which one was strongly struck while another was weakly struck along the edge.
2. Ryder probably repeated Betts's observation when he wrote that the die was badly worn.
3. Kurth advanced the theory that the reverse die was purposely defaced. Apparently he based this conclusion upon his examination of only one counterfeit halfpenny which was struck with the same reverse die. The halfpenny had a strong reverse and was likely Vlack 19-87C because this variety was plated in Kurth's foreword in Richardson's article. Kurth apparently was not aware of Betts's claim that there were counterfeit halfpence with the same reverse that were weakly struck along the circumference. Ironically, he wrote: "If this condition were due to wear of the die, as previously supposed, then specimens would be found showing various more moderate stages of wear." As it turns out, there are counterfeit halfpence that do show moderate stages of wear of the subject reverse die.
4. Richardson repeated Kurth's claim that the die was not worn, but, rather, purposely defaced to remove the BRITANNIA legend.

5. Bressett repeats the previous claims that the legend and date were either worn or intentionally removed from the die.

The Vermont "BRITANNIA" reverse die (Bressett V, Vlack 87C) was combined with several halfpenny obverse dies to create the following varieties: Vlack 18-87C, 19-87C, 20-87C, 21-II-87C, and 23-87C. By examining specimens of each halfpenny variety the reverse die condition can be determined and an emission sequence established. Reverse die 87C is at its sharpest when combined with obverse 20. When it is combined with obverse 19, a small diagonal die crack develops just above Britannia's head. During its combination with obverse 18 the left side of the legend and the date begin to noticeably weaken. Late issues of variety 18-87C were struck from a moderately worn reverse die that is characteristic of the Vermont "BRITANNIA" reverse, but not as developed. The late issues of variety 18-87C can also be identified by a thin vertical die crack on the obverse die that extends through the effigy's neck into the shoulder mail. Very rare variety 21-II-87C shows the same weakness as the late struck 18-87C specimens. Lastly, the unique specimen of variety 23-87C appears to have the same reverse die state as the early struck specimens of the Vermont "BRITANNIA" copper. An emission sequence has been established. Reverse die 87C was combined with various obverse dies in the following order: 20, 19, 18, 21-II, 23, and VT. Obverse VT is the Vermont "BRITANNIA" obverse.

A close examination of the first halfpenny die variety (20-87C) reveals that the letters were unevenly sunk into the reverse die along the left side. The tops of the letters were shallowly cut into the die while the bottoms of the letters were deeper into the die. Thus, from the onset this anomaly resulted in a weak impression along the top of the left side of the reverse legend. After the die cracked in combination 19-87C, the impression of the tops of the letters slowly became weaker and so did the date area. This suggests that the face of the die was gradually deforming and becoming convex. This phenomenon did not occur evenly around the circumference of the die and appears to have been at its worst in the date area. Also, near the end of its combination with halfpenny obverse 18 the face of the die appears to have been lightly lapped. This abrasion was done lightly enough that high-grade early issue Vermont "BRITANNIA" coppers still show the small diagonal die break above Britannia's head. However, the lapping did remove more detail from the die. Specifically, it further weakened the legend and date, and it removed some of the low relief from the central device, such as most of Britannia's right leg and some of the globe. When the die was finally used to strike the Vermont "BRITANNIA" coppers, the previously described die failure mechanism continued until the die catastrophically failed. Kenneth Bressett describe the final die state as follows: "In late state a massive die crack covers left half of date area, and a heavy flaw runs from head to second N."

This die state study of reverse die Vlack 87C during its halfpence usage reveals no strong evidence that the legend was deliberately removed from the die. Instead, it shows that the weak legend and date resulted from its heavy usage in coining halfpence. Thus, this study supports Wylls Betts's observation and conclusion which he made over a century ago: The Vermont "BRITANNIA" reverse die had indeed been "...worn out in striking halfpence before its use began with the Vermont obverse." Howard Kurth's conclusion that the die was deliberately defaced to remove the legend is unfounded and a result of incomplete study. He apparently arrived at his conclusion by inspecting only one reverse die-linked halfpence variety. Also, he was not aware of Betts's claim that there were several reverse die-linked halfpence varieties, and that one of these varieties showed the same weakness around the edge as the Vermont "BRITANNIA" copper.

The question also arises as to why this halfpenny reverse die was used with a Vermont obverse die. The large number of extant Vermont "BRITANNIA" coppers suggests that this muling was intentionally done and not a mere mix-up of dies. Howard Kurth is probably correct in his reasoning when he stated that it was done "...as a makeshift emergency, or to save the trouble of making

a new die....” At the time when the Vermont “BRITANNIA” was struck the future of the state coinages was not bright. Shortly after Machin’s Mills began operation the Constitution had been hammered out in Philadelphia and given to the states for ratification. On June 21, 1788, the Constitution became law when the ninth state, New Hampshire, ratified. New York, where Machin’s Mills was located, ratified on July 26, 1788. Soon, only the new federal government would have the right to mint coins. Thus, with their future doomed, Machin’s Mills probably struck the Vermont “BRITANNIA” mule for economical reasons. Today, the illogical and curious Vermont “BRITANNIA” copper represents the beginning of the end of the state coinage era.

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EPILOGUE

Update

At the time the preceding article was written, the newly discovered Vlack 23-87C imitation halfpenny was unique. In the intervening years another five specimens have been located for a current total of six extant specimens. Also, it is now understood that obverse die 19 was placed back on the coining press after the 18-87C combination had been minted. Thus, a modified emission sequence in which reverse 87C was combined with the various Vlack obverse dies is: 20, 19, 18, 19, 21, 23, and VT. (In the reprinted article, obverse die 21 is given as 21-II. When Bob Vlack classified the 21-87D combination he separated this variety into two types. Type I indicates a spread planchet while Type II specifies a normal planchet. The same die, Vlack 21, was used to strike both types.)

Photo Plate

Included in this addendum is a new photo plate, broken into two pages, that illustrates the die state of reverse die 87C during each of its marriages with the various obverse dies. The timeline starts at the top of the page and progresses forward down the page. The die combinations along with pertinent comments are given to the right of each coin image. The plate starts with die variety 20-87C and continues in time until ending with the Vermont "BRITANNIA" copper.

Initially reverse die 87C is combined with new obverse dies, starting with obverse 20. A catastrophic event must have happened rather quickly to obverse 20, however, making it no longer usable. This conclusion is based upon the extreme rarity of this variety. Next, another new die, obverse 19, was mounted in the press and a long run of coinage was executed as both dies start to show signs of wear. However, obverse 19 degraded at a faster pace than reverse 87C. Heavily worn by this usage, obverse 19 is replaced with another new die, obverse 18. Again, a long run of coinage ensues as reverse 87C begins to show serious signs of wear. Eventually, obverse 18 is removed from the press and three worn obverse dies (19, 21, and 23) are quickly paired with reverse 87C. It is difficult to determine with accuracy the sequence that these worn obverse dies were used because of the great rarity of these marriages. Therefore, it is apparent that these three worn dies saw very limited use with reverse 87C. Finally, a new obverse die was paired with reverse 87C but, this time, it was a Vermont die instead of an imitation British halfpenny die. These dies were used in an extensive coinage run that produced the Vermont "BRITANNIA" copper until both dies catastrophically failed.

So ends the saga of Vlack reverse die 87C. There is little doubt that it was one of the better made dies during the state coinage era. All evidence indicates that reverse die 87C served continuously on the coining press from the beginning of its life until it was no longer serviceable. During this time it was married to six different obverse dies. Three of the marriages (18-87C, 19-87C, and VT-87C) produced numerous offspring as shown by the large number of existing specimens of these varieties today. Vlack reverse die 87C was a workhorse die whose degradation was due to excessive usage and not intentional defacing as was once suggested.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank Tony Carlotto, Mike Ringo, Neil Rothschild, and Ed Sarrafian for their help in the preparation of this reprint. He would also like to thank Dave Bowers for granting permission to reprint this article.

Die State Analysis of Vlack 87C**20-87C**

Earliest use of reverse 87C showing the die in its finest condition.

**19-87C**

Early die state showing reverse 87C in the same condition as the previous combination.

**19-87C**

Early-to-middle die state showing the diagonal break over Britannia's head.

**18-87C**

Middle die state showing the diagonal break, slight weakness along the left side of the legend, but no weakness in the date. *Photo courtesy of Jack Howes; Sarrafian Collection.*

**18-87C**

Middle-to-late die state showing the diagonal break, weakness along the left side of the legend and the date.

Die State Analysis of Vlack 87C (continued)**19-87C**

Late die state of reverse 87C. After 18-87C was struck it was remarried with a heavily worn obverse 19 die. The left side of the legend is very weak, as is the date. The diagonal break does not show on this particular specimen but can be seen on other specimens of this marriage. *Photo courtesy of Tony Carlotto.*

**21-87C**

Obverse 21 was first used with reverse 87D. The worn obverse 21 die was then married with reverse 87C which is in approximately the same late die state as the preceding combination. The diagonal break faintly shows on this specimen.

**23-87C**

Obverse 23 was first used with reverse 88A. The worn obverse 23 die was then combined with reverse 87C. Approximately the same late reverse die state as the preceding two combinations. The diagonal break can be seen on this specimen. *Photo courtesy of Jack Howes; Sarrafian Collection.*

**VT-87C**

Early die state of a Vermont "BRITANNIA" copper where reverse 87C shows the same amount of wear as when it was combined with the late die state obverses 19, 21, and 23. The diagonal break does not show on this specimen but can be found on other early die state examples of this marriage. *Photo courtesy of Tony Carlotto.*

VIRGINIA HALFPENNY COUNTERFEITS, FORGERIES AND FACSIMILES

by

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INTRODUCTION

The production of copies of actual coinage for both legal and often illegal purposes has been in existence for nearly as long as the minting of coins.¹ Contemporary made copies of coins are usually produced of baser, cheaper metals in an attempt to pass them commercially as real coins, thereby producing an illegal profit for the coiner. Copies made at a later date have usually been produced for the enjoyment of the coin collector to fill the place of a rare and needed variety, or to fool the collector into paying an excessive amount for the coin, as if it were genuine. Documentation of both infamous and obscure makers of United States colonial coin copies abound in the numismatic literature.^{1, 2, 3, 4}

The Virginia halfpenny coinage was brought to America in 1774 after being minted at the Royal Mint in London.^{5, 6} This coinage was not released into circulation until 1775 and had a limited period of general usage before the intervention of the Revolutionary War. Virginia halfpenny coins have been found widely scattered throughout the colonial states by metal detectorists, and are often found in well-worn condition, establishing that they did circulate.⁶ However, many of the Virginia halfpenny coins were never placed into circulation, and at least one hoard consisting of a barrel of uncirculated Virginia halfpence is known to have survived into the twentieth century.⁷

The relative availability of uncirculated Virginian halfpence and the seeming dearth of interested collectors⁶ leads to the question, why would Virginia halfpence ever be a target for counterfeiters, forgers and producers of facsimiles? As a corollary question, do such copies exist? The purpose of this paper is to explore presently known counterfeits, forgeries and facsimiles of Virginia halfpenny coins.

COUNTERFEITS

Definition

A counterfeit coin is a coin produced through non-official channels with the deceptive purpose of being passed into circulation as part of the official coinage. The approach of most counterfeiters is to make lower weight coins of proper metallic content or use baser metals in the production of the counterfeits, as a means to realize a profit.

At this time the authors are unaware of any contemporary counterfeit Virginia coins. An extensive review of pre-Federal counterfeit coin production failed to mention any Virginia halfpence, even though a specific analysis of contemporary counterfeiting on a state by state basis was provided.⁸ Since extensive counterfeiting was occurring throughout America, as well as overseas, during this time frame, the question must be posed as to why Virginia halfpence escaped counterfeiting. The reason is multi-factored. First, one must consider the legal constraints in place for counterfeiting in the late 1700s. In Britain, a lack of enforcement of very stringent laws

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undermined the intent of anti-counterfeiting statutes. For example, due to the epidemic level of counterfeiting of George III coppers in Britain, a law was passed on June, 24, 1771, making it a felony to buy, sell, take or receive a counterfeit copper coin.^{1,9} However, due to lax enforcement, by 1773 over 50% of the copper coinage was low weight counterfeits.¹⁰

On the other hand, Virginia took a very serious stance toward counterfeiting of coins. In fact, Virginia state law governing counterfeiters was far more extreme than other states throughout the 1700s. For instance, in October 1710 and in November 1727, Virginia made counterfeiting of silver and gold coins, respectively, a treasonable act which was punishable by death.^{4,11} In October 1752, Daniel Johnson, a chemist, and William Jillet, a blacksmith, went to the gallows for attempting to counterfeit doubloons, pistoles, pieces of eight, and half pistareens.¹¹ Similarly, a silversmith, Low Jackson, was tried and convicted of counterfeiting Spanish doubloons in Virginia, and put to death by hanging on April 13, 1754.⁴ Therefore, Virginians showed themselves willing and able to enforce their anti-counterfeiting laws, unlike the British. Other than death, a common penalty for counterfeiters was flogging, pillory and cropping of the ears.¹ It would seem that a cropped ear in Virginia was a significant stigma. There is documentation of at least one case where a man, John Dougherty, who lost part of his ear in a fight, petitioned the Virginia court on May 3, 1774, to provide him proof that his ear had been lost in a fight and not otherwise.¹² The documenter of this occurrence theorizes that the only explanation for this petition was the existence of "*some law or custom by which criminals lost their ears*"!! Certainly counterfeiting was one of those offenses. On May 6, 1776, just a year after the release of Virginia halfpence into circulation, the passing of base (copper) coins was added to the Virginia laws incorporating death as a punishment. It has been theorized that the 1776 law was specifically aimed at protecting the Virginia halfpenny coinage which entered circulation in 1775.¹⁰

Another possibility for the lack of contemporary counterfeiting of the Virginia halfpenny coinage was its delayed release into circulation and at a time that saw coinage utilized to only a limited extent. We know the Virginia halfpence arrived in Virginia from the Royal Mint in London on February 14, 1774; however, they were not released into circulation until March of 1775, some 50 days prior to the start of the American Revolution.⁶ The apparent lack of circulation of the Virginia copper halfpence even caused Thomas Jefferson to incorrectly observe that "In Virginia, copper coins have never been in use."¹³ One can understand Jefferson's mistake, since once the Revolution began, hoarding of all circulated coins occurred and many copper coins were diverted to the melting pots to help sustain the war effort. Therefore, at the time of release of the Virginia copper coinage, it is likely that few were in active circulation and therefore were not a desirable object for active counterfeiting. On the other hand, once the war was won, many of the Virginia halfpence did emerge from hoards and experienced widespread circulation throughout the colonies.^{5,6}

Finally, a third reason counterfeiting of the Virginia halfpenny coinage may not have occurred was that they were so well made that cutting counterfeit dies to reproduce them in a believable manner would have been difficult. Even Benjamin Franklin took note of the Virginia coinage when he stated in a letter from London on January 5, 1774, the Virginia halfpence "may serve to keep out the worthless counterfeit Trash of late so common."¹⁴ There is no question that the quality control used in the production of this coinage was of the highest standards, and of all the colonial period coinages, the Virginia halfpenny coinage was the most uniform, as shown by the least amount of variance in the standard deviation of their weights.^{14,15}

Which combination of these factors, or additional reasons still to be discerned, deterred contemporary counterfeiting of the Virginia halfpenny coinage may never be known. However, long-time students of this coinage have not yet recognized any contemporary counterfeits of this coinage.¹⁶

Of interest, there are reports of a number of silver coated and at least one gold coated Virginia halfpennies. Whether these were gilded contemporaneously, as a way to illegally pass the silver coins as shillings and the gold coin as a guinea, is not readily evident. They could also be the modern product of idle hands. However, the collector should be aware that such manipulated coins do exist.

FORGERIES

Definition

A forged coin is a numismatic item that has been made, modified or altered in a manner to imitate another real coin, usually as a method to deceive a collector into buying it as an original.

The production of forgeries to deceive collectors has been an established practice as long as numismatists and museums have been acquiring coins.¹ Modern techniques for producing exact replicas of existing coins have reached such a level of expertise that the integrity and security of numismatics is at risk.¹⁷ In spite of a law put into place on November 29, 1973, called the Hobby Protection Act, and the multiple revisions of this Act with the latest occurring on May 18, 2004, the hobby remains at significant risk from unscrupulous forgers.¹⁸ An understanding of the protection afforded numismatists by the Hobby Protection act is important. Provisions include:

Sec. 304.2 General requirement.

Imitation ... numismatic items subject to the Act shall be marked in conformity with the requirements of the Act and the regulations promulgated thereunder. Any violation of these regulations shall constitute a violation of the Act and of the Federal Trade Commission Act.

Sec. 304.6 Marking requirements for imitation numismatic items.

(a) An imitation numismatic item which is manufactured in the United States, or imported into the United States for introduction into or distribution in commerce, shall be plainly and permanently marked "COPY".

(b) The word "COPY" shall be marked upon the item legibly, conspicuously, and nondeceptively, and in accordance with the further requirements of these regulations.

(1) The word "COPY" shall appear in capital letters, in the English language.

(2) The word "COPY" shall be marked on either the obverse or the reverse surface of the item. It shall not be marked on the edge of the item.

(3) An imitation numismatic item of incusable material shall be incused with the word "COPY" in sans-serif letters having a vertical dimension of not less than two millimeters (2.0 mm) or not less than one-sixth of the diameter of the reproduction, and a minimum depth of three-tenths of one millimeter (0.3 mm) or to one-half (1/2) the thickness of the reproduction, whichever is the lesser. The minimum total horizontal dimension of the word "COPY" shall be six millimeters (6.0 mm) or not less than one-half of the diameter of the reproduction.

(4) An imitation numismatic item composed of nonincusable material shall be imprinted with the word "COPY" in sans-serif letters having a vertical dimension of not less than two millimeters (2.0 mm) or not less than one-sixth of the diameter of the reproduction. The minimum total horizontal dimension of the word "COPY" shall be six millimeters (6.0 mm) or not less than one-half of the diameter of the reproduction.

Failure to comply with these regulations allows prosecution to the full extent of the law by the Federal Trade Commission.¹⁸ However, forgeries made prior to 1973 are not governed by these rules and regulations and many numismatic forgeries, including Virginian halfpence, were made during the period when no laws governing the forgery of numismatic items existed. In addition, proving that a particular item was made at a specific time in history is problematic. An item made last week could be claimed to have been produced prior to 1973. Finally, as pointed out by Dan Fredius in his *Coin World* column, the resale of unmarked forgeries is not illegal, only the manufacture and importation of these items, as long as the seller is not purposely defrauding the buyer.¹⁹ There are many unmarked forgeries that the authors have seen sold on eBay at prices that are multiples of their actual value, due to unsuspecting collectors thinking they were obtaining original numismatic items. Though the American Numismatic Association is presently working with eBay to prevent such overt defrauding, the practice still flourishes. Virginia halfpenny coinage has not been immune from these forgeries. Though most Virginia forgeries are obvious fakes, some can be quite clever and deceptive.²⁰ Discussion of these fakes will be divided into those which are quite deceptive, called forgeries, and those which are easily recognized, called facsimiles.

AUTHENTIC VIRGINIA HALFPENCE

A better understanding and recognition of fraudulent copies and facsimiles of the Virginia coins is obtained with a more in-depth knowledge of what constitutes authentic Virginia halfpenny coinage. Though modern forgery techniques can produce very deceptive replicas of actual coins,¹⁷ the greater one's appreciation of the subtle attributes of the true coinage, the better prepared one is to recognize fakes.

SPECIFIC GRAVITY: We know that the planchets used to produce Virginia halfpence were relatively good copper. Since copper has a specific gravity of 8.920, one method for determining authenticity are deviations from the expected specific gravity.²⁶ Lead which was often used in casting has a specific gravity of 11.340, while nickel is 8.900, tin is 7.298, and zinc is 7.130.²¹ Therefore, with judicious mixing of metals, a specific gravity equal to copper could be obtained in a cast forgery. Alternatively the cast forgery could simply be made of copper since the copper coin forger is not concerned about saving money by skimping on the metal content of his coins. The concern is making coins deceptive enough to pass for true numismatic items. In an evaluation of 21 genuine Virginia halfpence varieties (see Table 1), the average specific gravity was 8.76 with a range of 8.64 to 8.99. Therefore, it would seem that this observation helps substantiate the relatively high copper content of the actual Virginia coinage.

WEIGHT: Another attribute of the actual Virginia coinage that can be compared to a suspected forgery is weight. We know that the specified weight of a Virginia halfpenny by the Royal Mint was 116.7 grains.¹⁴ This coinage is acknowledged as the most uniform colonial coinage in regard to standard deviations in weight of actual individual coins.¹⁴ For example, in a survey of 32 mint state Virginia halfpennies, Spilman found an average weight of 115.74 grains with a standard deviation of only 5.49 grains.¹⁵ When 33 well worn and circulated Virginian coins recovered during excavations in Colonial Williamsburg were evaluated, the average weight was 107.82 grains with a standard deviation of 5.47 grains. A re-look at the weights of 47 mint state Virginia halfpence was performed by Mossman with an average weight of 117.2 grains and a standard deviation of 4.5 grains.¹⁴ Therefore, the consistency of the coinage is relatively remarkable. On the other hand, if one evaluates the extremes of weights for individual coins, the range went from a low of 105 grains to a high of 125 grains. A check on the weights of the 21 coins owned by one of the authors of this paper (see Table 1) reveals an average weight of 117.2 grains with a range of 107.1 to 122.5 grains, which generally agrees with both Spilman and Mossman. Therefore in evaluating an individual coin, it must be understood that significant variations in weight can be seen within the true Virginia coinage.

VARIETY (Newman)	WEIGHT (grains)	S. G.	X-AXIS (mm)	Y-AXIS (mm)	THICKNESS (mm)	DIE AXIS (degrees)	GRADE
2-D	107.1	8.64	25.0	24.7	1.9	180	UNC
3-F	113.3	8.65	26.1	25.5	2.0	182	UNC
4-G	122.3	8.99	25.4	25.0	2.2	179	AU
5-B	114.8	8.76	25.6	24.9	2.0	183	EF
5-Z	116.7	8.71	25.6	25.4	2.1	180	UNC
6-X	116.5	8.69	25.1	24.7	2.2	183	AU
7-D	113.2	8.78	26.1	25.8	2.1	180	UNC
8-H	113.3	8.72	25.9	25.5	1.9	177	VF
9-B	117.9	8.93	24.9	24.8	2.2	180	EF
10-W	114.2	8.65	26.1	25.7	2.0	180	UNC
13-V	113.9	8.76	25.5	25.4	2.1	180	UNC
20-N *	122.5	8.75	25.4	25.0	2.2	182	UNC
20-X	120.1	8.96	25.0	25.2	2.0	180	UNC
21-N	118.5	8.84	25.6	25.1	2.1	180	UNC
22-S	121.8	8.83	25.5	25.4	2.2	181	UNC
23-Q	116.8	8.78	25.3	24.8	2.2	180	AU
23-R	118.6	8.59	25.1	25.0	2.2	178	UNC
24-K	115.0	8.78	25.8	25.4	2.1	178	UNC
25-M	123.0	8.72	25.7	25.4	2.2	180	UNC
26-Y	125.0	8.74	25.9	25.4	2.2	180	UNC
27-J	117.5	8.70	25.2	25.4	2.2	180	UNC
AVERAGE	117.2	8.76	25.5	25.2	2.1	180	
RANGE	107.1 - 122.5	8.64 - 8.99	24.9 - 26.1	24.7 - 25.8	1.9 - 2.2	177 - 183	

Table 1: Genuine Virginia Halfpence. (S. G. = Specific Gravity, * Coin shown in a figure.)

DIAMETERS: Another variable that is measurable is the diameter. In a series of 21 genuine Virginia halfpence (see Table 1), the diameters varied from 24.9 to 26.1 millimeters (mm) in the left/right direction (x-axis) with an average of 25.5 mm. Up/down (y-axis) diameters varied from 24.7 to 25.8 mm with an average of 25.2 mm. One can see that typically the x-axis diameter is slightly larger than the y-axis. The cause of this discrepancy is the slightly larger side-to-side spread of the planchet metal on striking without a collar. Typically the x-axis diameters are larger but one will note that in the case of the variety 20-X in Table 1, the y-axis diameter actually is slightly greater. Cast forgeries are known to typically be smaller than the real coinage by at least a few percentage points due to shrinkage of the metal during the production process.²²

THICKNESS: Another variable is the thickness of the coin. In 21 genuine Virginia halfpence of different varieties the thickness varied from 1.9 to 2.2 mm with an average of 2.1 mm. This variation was remarkably small and a testament to the accuracy of the rolling machines used to make the copper sheets from which the Virginia planchet stock was made. Forgeries can vary widely in their thickness. Therefore, the thickness measurement can be helpful for determining a fake, if very thin or very thick.

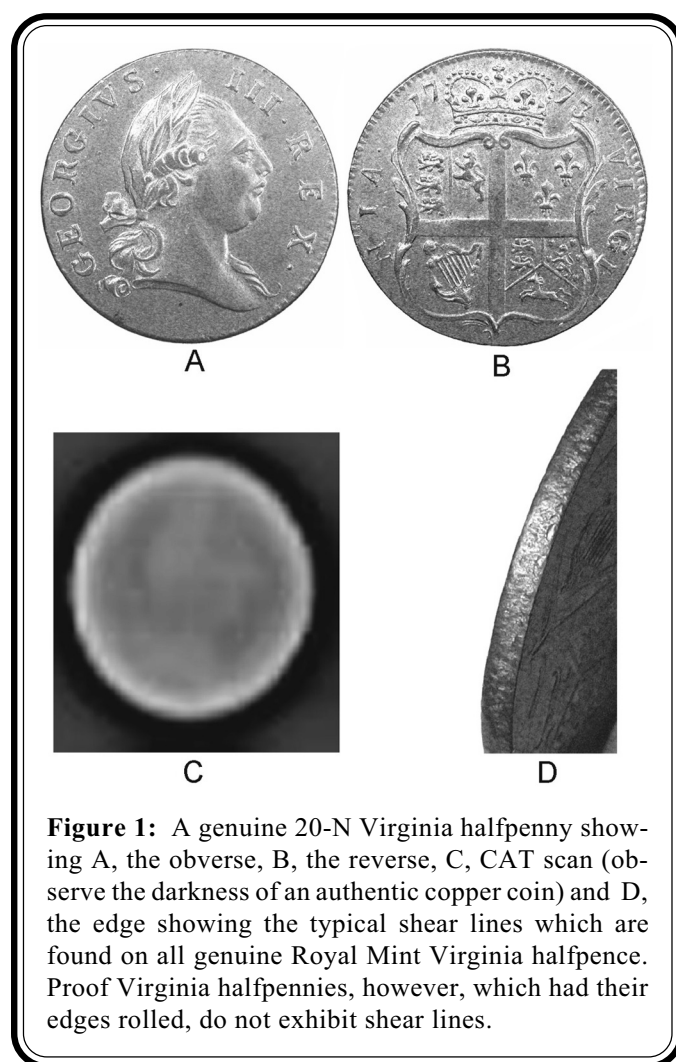


Figure 1: A genuine 20-N Virginia halfpenny showing A, the obverse, B, the reverse, C, CAT scan (observe the darkness of an authentic copper coin) and D, the edge showing the typical shear lines which are found on all genuine Royal Mint Virginia halfpence. Proof Virginia halfpennies, however, which had their edges rolled, do not exhibit shear lines.

X-RAY ANALYSIS: Additional data on genuine Virginia halfpence can be obtained with x-ray analysis. In particular the initial scanning x-ray used for a Computerized Axial Tomography X-Ray (CAT scan) seems to accurately and rapidly separate cast and electrotpe forgeries from genuine Virginia halfpennies. In genuine specimens the image on x-ray is somewhat luminescent and allows one to pick out characteristics on the coin's surface that are in relief. This is as opposed to the fakes which produce a white-out effect due to the less radiolucent material from which they are made.

DIE ROTATION: As might be expected, the high quality of the Royal Mint's production of the Virginia coinage produced a consistent die rotation when comparing the orientation of the obverse die with respect to the reverse die. Based on the axis determinations on the 21 coins listed in Table 1, the average die rotation was a very consistent 180° or "coin turn." In fact, the range of die rotations of 177 to 183 degrees was within the probable error associated with die rotation

measurements. An additional 30 genuine Virginia halfpence were also examined for die axis orientation with the same finding. The authors are not aware of any Virginia halfpenny with an obverse to reverse die orientation other than 180°.

EXAMINATION: The most important method for determining authentic Virginia halfpenny coinage is the look of the coin. The subtle nuances of the devices, the pattern of the legends, the texture of the copper, and the general patina, all interact to create a Gestalt that says real or fake. An example of a genuine Virginia halfpenny is shown in Figure 1. Increased difficulty arises when evaluating a worn or lower grade coin, where the handiwork of the original minters is not as clear or evident. It must be emphasized that one of the most important parts of a Virginia halfpenny to evaluate when determining its authenticity is its third side – the edge. Virginia halfpenny planchets were produced in Britain with a device that made them with a single punch – a round rod pressed through a copper sheet of rolled planchet stock into a circular hole, which resulted in the edges having a distinctive sheared look (see Figure 1).^{23,24} The American planchet cutter was more of a telescoping scissors cutter which had two blades coming together from either side of the copper sheet, producing a coin with more rounded edges.^{23, 24}

VIRGINIA HALFPENCE FORGERIES

Accurate reproductions of existing Virginia varieties through both casting and electrotyping might have initially been undertaken for innocent purposes, such as providing low cost examples of a specific colonial coin for filling a needed spot in a “type” collector’s holdings. However, as time has passed and many of these coins have come out of estates unlabeled as forgeries, they can and do get mistaken for genuine Virginia halfpennies and can command prices far in excess of their actual value. Of interest in Kenney’s 1952 review of “Struck Copies of Early American Coins,” there were no Virginia halfpence listed as having been made by the primary producers of copies – Thomas Wyatt, Edwin Bishop, Alfred Robinson, William Idler, John Bolan, Frank

Edwards, Montroville Dickeson, Wuesthoff, Kettle, Horace Grant, Smith and others.²⁵ Therefore, the lack of documented struck copies of Virginia halfpence in 1952 was either due to them all having been sequestered, so that they were unavailable for study, or due to there not being any. The authors think the latter is the most likely explanation. Another book written by Don Taxay and published in 1963 which details “unofficial” counterfeit coins, also fails to mention any Virginia counterfeit halfpence.²⁶ Even by 1975, Spanbauer’s exploration of colonial copies was able to list only a single crude Virginia halfpenny fake of the type which will be discussed under facsimiles.²

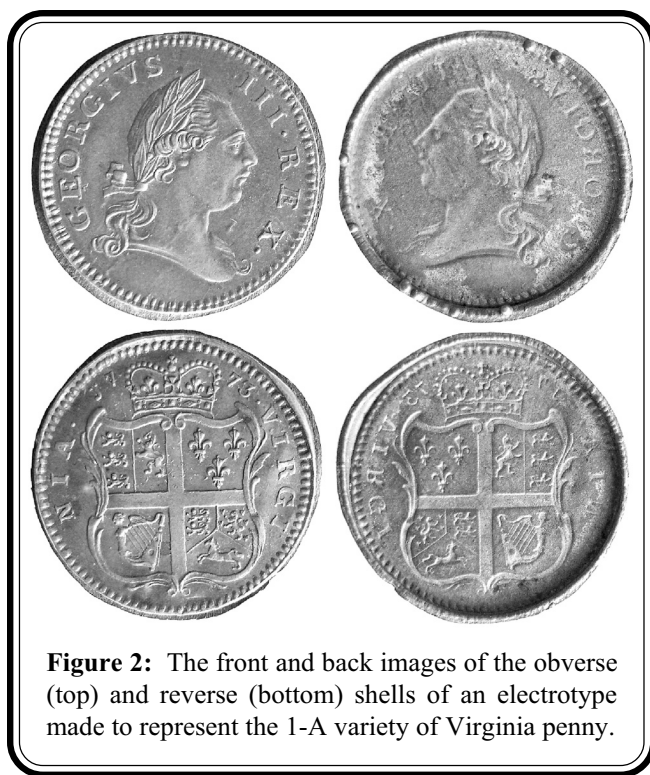


Figure 2: The front and back images of the obverse (top) and reverse (bottom) shells of an electrotype made to represent the 1-A variety of Virginia penny.

The forgeries with which the authors are aware of fall into four main Virginia halfpenny varieties. We expect that others exist which have yet to come to our attention. These varieties are the 1-A, 7-D, the 22-S²⁰ and

the 23-Q. There is one variety, the 10-W, which was previously described as having been forged²⁷ but on a more in-depth evaluation it has not been substantiated as a forgery. In addition, a number of facsimiles will be discussed later in this paper.

Variety 1-A: This variety is also known as the Virginia penny and is thought to have been a trial piece. Being quite rare it is understandable that this might be a target coin for a forger.⁵ Though the authors are not aware of any completed forgery of this coin, the shell of a well made electrotpe of the obverse and reverse is known (see Figure 2). These electrotpe shells are purported to have come from George Fuld and in turn were evidently purchased from Stuart Mosher in 1950.²⁸ No other examples are known to exist at this time.

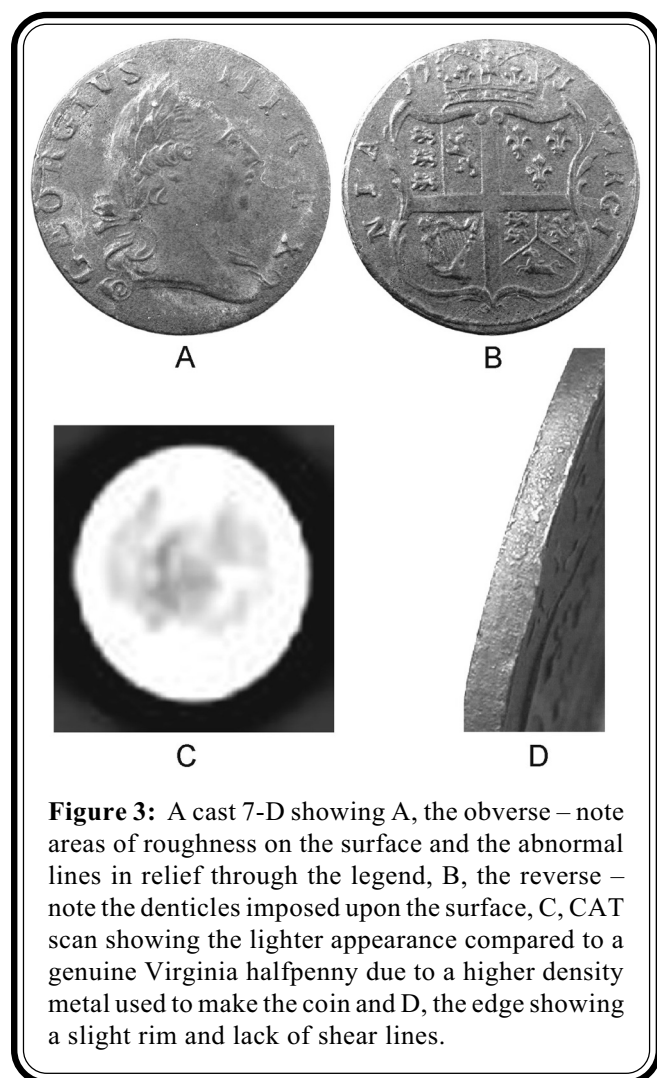


Figure 3: A cast 7-D showing A, the obverse – note areas of roughness on the surface and the abnormal lines in relief through the legend, B, the reverse – note the denticles imposed upon the surface, C, CAT scan showing the lighter appearance compared to a genuine Virginia halfpenny due to a higher density metal used to make the coin and D, the edge showing a slight rim and lack of shear lines.

Variety 7-D: Cast counterfeits can be quite deceptive if the coin is examined only superficially. However, due to the composition of the casting metal, cast counterfeits will often not ring and a casting port can occasionally be found on the edge which may have been filed or smoothed to remove evidence of the port. It must be cautioned that “ringing” a coin is an imperfect method for determining its authenticity. New casting and forging techniques allow the production of fakes which “ring” in a normal manner.²² Three specimens have been examined of the cast 7-D forgery and the results are shown in Table 2. One will note that all are significantly underweight from the expected Royal Mint coins with an average weight of only 94.8 grains and a range of 90.5 to 97.4 grains. Part of the reason for being underweight is their relatively smaller size compared to the Royal Mint coinage. Their x-axis diameters were on average only 24.6 mm with a range of 24.4 to 24.8 mm and their y-axis diameters were on average 24.3 mm with a range of 24.2 to 24.6 mm. An average specific gravity of 9.62 with a range of 8.42 to 10.7 was of help only when significantly out of the expected range (see Table 1), but the CAT scan revealed a much less

radiolucent material used when compared to the Royal Mint high copper content (see Figure 3). The most telling aspect of these coins, however, was an evaluation of the edge which showed an unnatural and unexpected spotty appearance, rather than the expected sheared look (see Figure 3). While these fakes are called casts in the context of this paper, many fakes are actually a combination of both casting and electroplating technology. In fact, increasingly deceptive methods are being used by forgers to prevent their recognition as fakes.¹⁷

COIN #	VARIETY (Newman)	WEIGHT (grains)	SPECIFIC GRAVITY	X-AXIS (mm)	Y-AXIS (mm)
COIN 1 *	7-D	96.5	8.42	24.8	24.6
COIN 2	7-D	90.5	9.73	24.4	24.2
COIN 3	7-D	97.4	10.7	24.6	24.2
AVERAGE		94.8	9.62	24.6	24.3
RANGE		90.5 - 97.4	8.42 - 10.7	24.4 - 24.8	24.2 - 24.6
COIN 4 *	22-S	114.2	10.02	24.5	24.7
COIN 5	22-S	99.5	9.21	24.3	24.8
COIN 6	22-S	94.2	9.71	23.7	23.8
COIN 7	22-S	104.8	9.53	24.0	24.2
COIN 8	22-S	134.0	9.85	23.3	23.1
AVERAGE		109.3	9.66	24.0	24.1
RANGE		94.2 - 134.0	9.21 - 10.02	23.3 - 24.5	23.1 - 24.8
COIN 9 *	23-Q	113.4	9.00	25.4	25.2
COIN 10	23-Q	92.2	10.02	25.5	25.4
AVERAGE		102.8	9.51	25.5	25.3
COIN 11 *	10-W	108.0	8.71	24.9	24.7

Table 2: Virginia Halfpence Forgeries. (* Coins that are shown in the figures.)

Variety 22-S: A total of five electrotpe 22-S Virginia halfpenny forgeries have been examined (see Table 2). Though some of these forgeries are underweight and some significantly overweight, the average weight was a respectable 109.3 grains with a range of 94.2 to 134 grains. The specific gravity was somewhat helpful with an average of 9.66 and a range of 9.21 to 10.02 which was significantly higher than found in the Royal Mint coins. The diameter data was also helpful since, like the 7-D fakes, the sizes were less than the genuine Royal Mint coins. X-axis diameters averaged 24 mm with a range of 23.3 to 24.5 mm, while the y-axis diameters averaged 24.1 mm with a range of 23.1 to 24.8 mm. Once again, the CAT scan revealed these as fakes due to the brighter images they produced by increased blockage of radiation (see Figure 4). The really important finding that alerts one that they are fakes is the seam that bisects and runs around the edge.

Variety 23-Q: Only two electrotpe forgeries of the 23-Q were studied (see Table 2). The weight data shows a range of 92.2 to 113.4 grains which is not helpful. Once again the average specific gravity of 9.51, with a range of 9 to 10.02, is of use only when significantly out of the expected range (such as the 10.02 specific gravity coin). The diameter data on these coins was also very deceptive with an x-axis diameter range of 25.4 to 25.5 mm and y-axis diameters with a range of 25.2 to 25.4 mm – diameters that would be expected in true Virginia halfpence. However, the

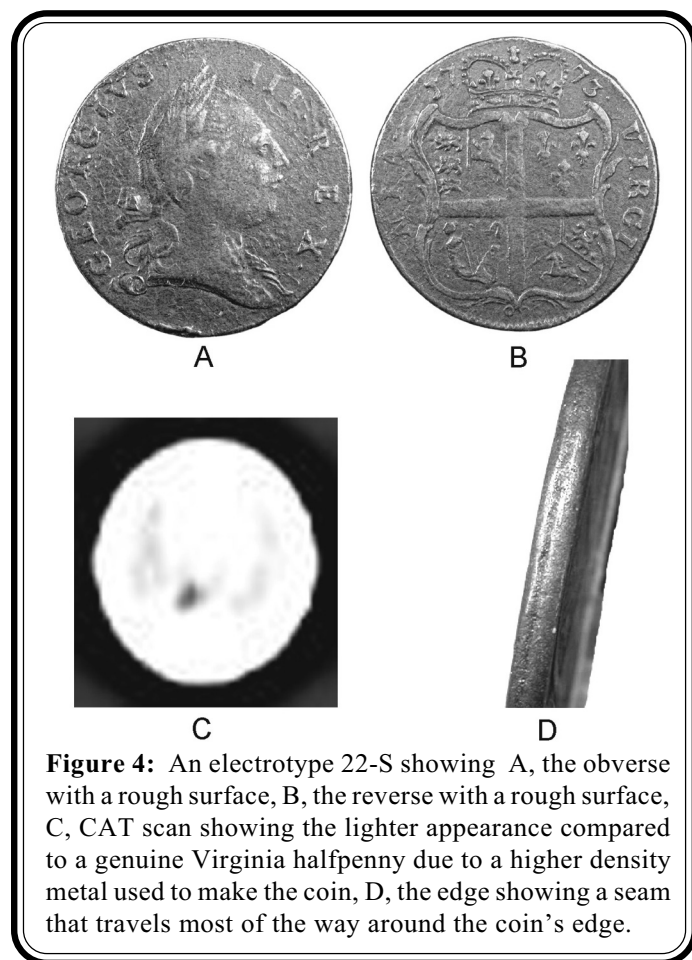


Figure 4: An electrotype 22-S showing A, the obverse with a rough surface, B, the reverse with a rough surface, C, CAT scan showing the lighter appearance compared to a genuine Virginia halfpenny due to a higher density metal used to make the coin, D, the edge showing a seam that travels most of the way around the coin's edge.

CAT scan quickly revealed them as fakes with the bright appearance of the image compared to the true copper coins (see Figure 5). A substitute method for revealing them as fakes, rather than the highly technical CAT scan, was an examination of the edges, which in both coins revealed a seam. In the coin image provided (see Figure 5), the seam has actually come apart. On the whole, however, the nice smooth surfaces and excellent coloration of these coins made them one of the most deceptive forgeries evaluated.

Variety 10-W: An initial report of a 10-W variety Virginia halfpenny as being cast²⁷ was incorrect. The determination of the coin as cast was made based on what appeared to be a casting port on the coin's edge and the smeared look of the devices on the coin's surface (see Figure 6). In preparing this paper, further evaluation of the coin was undertaken including CAT scanning. The results of that evaluation are shown in Table

2. The coin's weight of 108 grains falls within the expected range for genuine Virginia halfpence, especially in worn condition.¹⁵ Similarly, the x-axis diameter of 24.9 mm and the y-axis diameter of 24.7 mm are both at the lower end but within the range for a genuine coin. Of importance, the specific gravity of 8.71 is solidly within the normal range and almost falls on the average specific gravity of 8.76 found for authentic Virginia halfpence (see Table 1). The CAT scan image is the final piece of evidence which substantiates the true nature of the coin (see Figure 6) with the lucency on the x-ray being essentially the same as a true Virginia halfpenny (see Figure 1). The primary cause for misidentification of this coin as a fake was the presence of what looked to be a casting port that had been filed down at 9 o'clock on the obverse of the coin. An alternative explanation for the odd appearance of the edge could be that it was a coin used as a jewelry piece²⁸ or had experienced some other environmental damage. No other 10-W Virginia halfpenny fakes are known to the authors.

VIRGINIA HALFPENNY FACSIMILES

Unlike the previously mentioned cast forgeries, there is a large group of fake Virginia halfpence that are not at all deceptive once their primary characteristics are recognized. In spite of their relative lack of deceptiveness they are still being sold on eBay on a routine basis at prices which are many multiples of their value.²⁹ When the authors have contacted both the sellers and the buyers of these coins, they routinely plead ignorance that the coin was a fake. Though the saying states, "Let the buyer beware," another saying is, "A fool and his money are soon parted." Armed

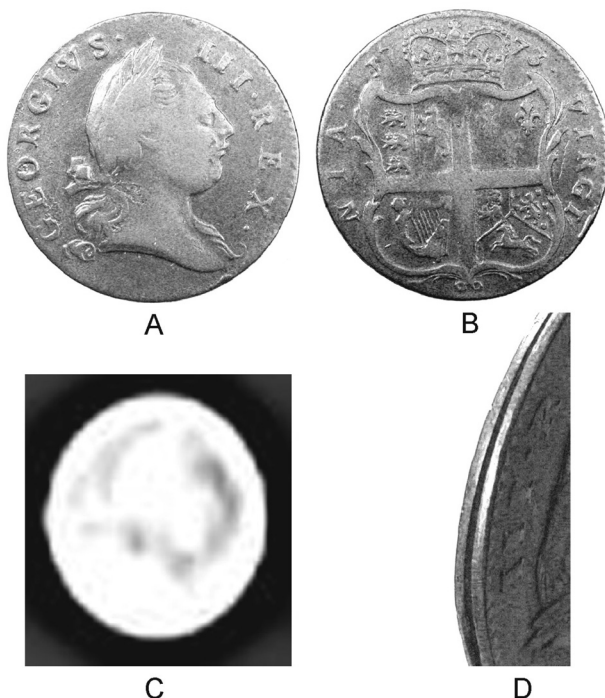


Figure 5: An electrotype 23-Q showing A, the obverse which looks fairly good except for extra metal existing around some of the legend (observe the dots of metal in the O, G, and V in GEORGIVS and the R in REX, B, the reverse showing some extra blips of metal on various areas of the surface, C, CAT scan showing the lighter appearance compared to a genuine Virginia halfpenny due to a higher density metal used to make the coin, D, the edge which has become separated showing the two sides of the coin which had originally been united to produce this electrotype.

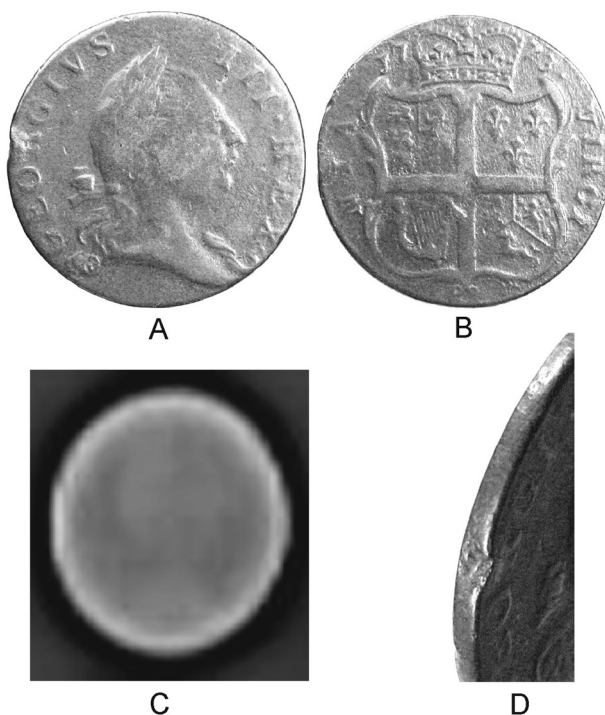


Figure 6: A genuine 10-W that had been previously declared a cast forgery, showing A, the obverse which is rough and has an elevated cud of metal over the R in GEORGIVS, B, the reverse which is rough and has a cud of metal over the second I in VIRGINIA which corresponds to the cud on the obverse, C, CAT scan showing the darker color which is characteristic of a coin made from copper, D, the edge over the cud area showing some bubbling of the metal but the rest of the edge has an appearance consistent with a Royal Mint product that has been slightly smoothed.



Figure 7: An almost comical fake Virginia halfpenny of indeterminate variety that has the obverse and reverse designs crudely in relief.



Figure 8: A die for the obverse of the Virginia halfpenny replicas made by Peter Rosa which now resides in the American Numismatic Society die collection.

with the basic knowledge of what a true Virginia halfpenny looks like, hopefully the *CNL* readership can avoid the pitfall of buying a fake Virginia halfpenny as their type coin.

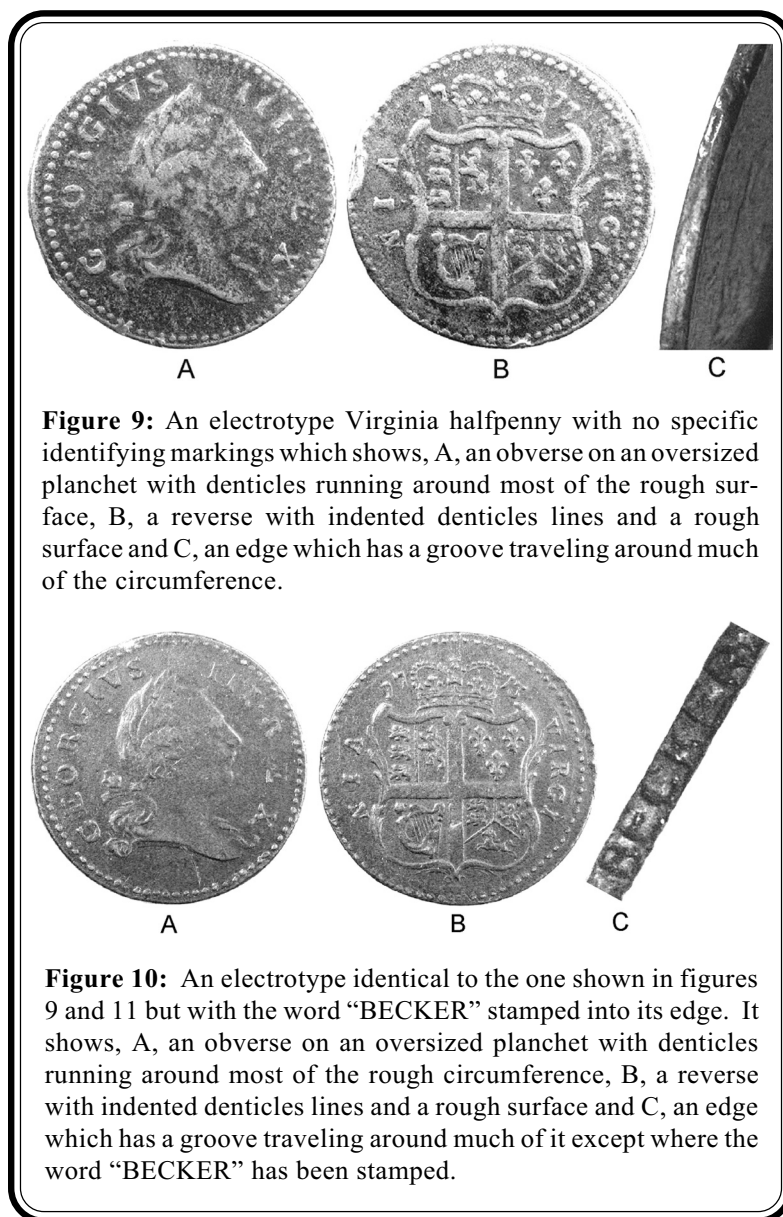
CRUDE FACSIMILIES - Though the origin of some crude facsimiles is unknown, they are so poorly made that they could have served as prizes in Cracker Jack boxes (see Figure 7). Only someone with no knowledge of early American coins in general, and the Virginia coinage specifically, would be fooled by these poor copies.

ROSA REPRODUCTIONS - Perhaps the most prolific producer of modern reproductions of the Virginia halfpence coinage was Peter J. Rosa.^{30, 31, 32} In 1955, Rosa founded the Becker Manufacturing Company, which was named after the infamous coin forger from the 1700s.³³ He also produced facsimiles under the company names Becker Medalllic Arts and Becker Reproductions, Inc., and Dory Duplicates.³² Peter Rosa's partner at Dory Duplicates, Roy Moss, is presently 86 years old and still making many of the same

facsimiles with a company renamed Dory Development.³⁴ Mr. Moss recalled that Peter Rosa was not a very good business man and needed a great deal of financial direction when running his coin reproduction business. His personal problems and financial difficulties existed in spite of a very active business, which at its height was manufacturing as many as 200,000 replicas a year. In 1968 there were at least 538 different varieties of coin replicas in his stock and by 1978 he had as many as 700 dies.³¹ Though Rosa primarily produced replicas of ancients, he did make copies of colonial coins. A listing of colonial coin copies from Rosa that appeared in an advertisement was republished and discussed by John Kleeberg in a *Colonial Newsletter* article.³² In the listing were the following items:

- | | |
|------------------------------|------|
| 146. Virginia Halfpenny 1773 | 3.00 |
| 147. Virginia Penny 1773 | 3.00 |

Of special interest, due to the donation of many Rosa dies to the American Numismatic Society, an obverse die for the Virginia halfpenny is available for study (see Figure 8). In addition, a coin struck from this die is part of the ANS collection.³⁷



Rosa's method for producing his copies was a sequential process which is still being used today by Roy Moss in his company Dory Development.³⁴ Mr. Moss remembers that Peter Rosa obtained many plaster casts of ancients directly from the Coin Department of the British Museum in the mid-1960s. Coin casts which were not available from England were made from original coins or other copies.³⁴ Based on the observations of one of the people who helped make the replicas for Rosa as a teenager, dental material was then used to produce a mold from the plaster cast of the coins by a centrifugal casting process.³⁵ The dies were made by pouring a molten metal, primarily zinc and aluminum, into the mold. The metal to make the dies was obtained by scavenging metal from old lamp bases at the dump.³⁶ From these dies a second mold was produced using a temperature resistant, hard rubber. All coins were cast,

not struck, using these rubber molds.³⁶ The casting process used a white metal which was a mixture of lead, antimony, and tin called linotype.³⁵ These casts were then electroplated and "aged" by oxidation.³⁵ Peter Rosa also made coins of different sizes from the original mold. Though the manner by which this was done is attributed to the use of a Janvier lathe,³² Mr. Moss indicates that in actuality a proprietary process was used based upon expansion or shrinkage of the rubber molds by use of chemicals.³⁴ In fact, many of Rosa's copies are larger than the actual coins. Kleeberg observed that the Rosa replicas often vary greatly in weight, which can serve as an indicator that they are not genuine.³²

Early in his copy production Rosa would not mark the coin as a copy (see Figure 9). Over time, he began marking the edges of the coins, since he was opposed to "marring" the surfaces of the coin. For the Virginia replicas in particular, the incused word "BECKER" can be found on the edges of some replicas (see Figure 10). Evidently the word "COPY" also appeared on the edges



Figure 11: A Dory Development copy of a “Virginia Penny” identical to the one shown in figures 9 and 10 but with the word “COPY” stamped into the reverse showing A, an obverse on an oversized planchet with denticles running around the circumference and having a rough surface, B, a reverse with indented denticles and a rough surface showing the word “COPY” stamped to the right below the shield and C, the edge which has been smoothed.



Figure 12: A Dory Development copy of a “Virginia Halfpenny” with the word “COPY” stamped into the reverse showing A, an obverse on a cut down planchet with no evidence of denticles and a rough surface, B, a reverse with minimal denticles and a rough surface showing the word “COPY” stamped on the lower portion of the shield and C, an edge which has a groove traveling around much of it and an offset showing where the two halves of the reproduction were united unevenly.

of his replicas,³¹ though the authors have not found a Virginia replica with this edge lettering. There are a number of coins which are identical to the Rosa Virginia replicas with the word “COPY” incused into the coin’s surface (see Figure 11). Since Rosa had indicated his distain for this approach in spite of the requirements of the Hobby Protection Act,¹⁸ these can be attributed to more recent production.³⁴ Though primary documentation could not be found, both Mr. Moss and Mr. Doyle³⁴ remember that during a *Time-Life Magazine* promotion during 1967, some 10,000 sets of colonial coins replicas, including a Virginia copper, were produced and distributed.³⁸ Many of the Rosa casts are being sold as actual Virginia coins on eBay. As one numismatist observed:

eBay is dominated by clueless sellers and clueless buyers, not knowledgeable numismatists. Numismatic fraud is rampant.²⁹

The continued fraud and ignorance by both the buyers and sellers of these copies is part of the impetus for researching and writing this paper.

Once the Rosa Virginia copies have been studied, it is apparent that they are not meant to fool the knowledgeable collecting public. Based on an analysis of eight of these copies, which are all patterned on the 7-D die combination of the actual Virginia coinage, the weight varies between 123.4 and 177.3 grains with an average weight of 147.5 grains (see Table 3). This greatly exceeds the expected weight of actual Virginia halfpence. In addition the range of specific

COIN #	INSCRIPTION	WEIGHT (grains)	SPECIFIC GRAVITY	X-AXIS (mm)	Y-AXIS (mm)
ROSA 1 *	NONE	157.0	9.63	27.9	27.7
ROSA 2	NONE	136.8	10.06	27.3	27.5
ROSA 3	NONE	177.3	9.85	28.0	28.0
ROSA 4 *	BECKER	153.4	9.83	27.9	27.6
ROSA 5	BECKER	157.4	9.78	28.0	27.8
ROSA 6 *	COPY	124.1	9.93	26.3	27.1
ROSA 7	COPY	123.4	9.61	26.5	26.8
ROSA 8	COPY	150.2	10.01	27.1	27.1
AVERAGE		147.5	9.84	27.4	27.5
RANGE		123.4 - 177.3	9.61 - 10.06	26.3 - 28.0	26.8 - 28.0
CWF 1 *	CWF	122.4	8.44	25.7	26.1
CWF 2 *	COPY	138.8	8.68	26.8	26.7
CWF 3	COPY	135.0	8.77	26.8	26.2
CWF 4	COPY	148.7	8.70	26.8	26.9
CWF 5	COPY	134.1	8.70	26.5	26.5
AVERAGE		135.8	8.66	26.5	26.5
RANGE		122.4 - 148.7	8.44 - 8.77	25.7 - 26.8	26.1 - 26.9

Table 3: Virginia Halfpence Facsimilies. (* Coins that are shown in the figures.)

gravities from 9.61 to 10.06 with an average of 9.84 is much greater than the actual Virginia coinage, indicating the use of a heavier metal in their production. Finally, the range of x-axis diameters of 26.3 to 28 mm with an average of 27.4 mm, as well as y-axis diameters between 26.8 to 28 mm with an average of 27.5 mm, is far larger than the true Virginia coinage. This makes their identification fairly easy. In addition, they all have the same “look” with wavy, mottled surfaces, and the edges which are telltale indicators of a fake (see Figures 9-11). The peculiar beaded border serving as denticles is also a defining characteristic. Of interest in the Rosa ad for colonial reproductions,³² he indicates the sale of both a “Virginia Halfpenny 1773” and a “Virginia Penny 1773” as two separate items. An intriguing possibility is presented with an evaluation of the two Rosa Virginia copies in the American Numismatic Society’s collection.³⁷ The two ANS specimens have the following specifics:

ANS Coin 1989.99.173 – diameter of 25 mm and weight of 101.8 grains

ANS Coin 1989.99.174 – diameter of 28 mm and weight of 168.7 grains

Could these two coins with very different sizes and weights represent the halfpenny and the penny in Rosa’s ad? On inspecting the two coins, both are made from the same die, just the sizes and weights differ. Of interest, in the ANS collection of dies, an obverse Rosa Virginia die (ANS die 2000.17.17) exists which has a diameter of 28 mm. By reversing the image of this die, one can see an exact match with the larger Rosa Virginia replicas. Substantiation of this theory is

provided by Peter Rosa's previous partner who still makes copies of what are called both the Virginia penny (see Figure 11) and halfpenny (see Figure 12).³⁴ The halfpenny is 24.4 mm in diameter and weights 61.9 grains, while the penny measures 27 mm. in diameter and is 156.6 grains in weight. The two copies seem to be made from the same hubbed die but with some shrinkage of the die for the halfpenny copy, as well as a loss of the peripheral design, including most of the denticles. In addition a comparison of the replica being made now of the Virginia penny in Figure 11 with the previously made Rosa copies in Figures 9 and 10 shows that all copies are seemingly duplicates of each other. The presence of these same two denominations presently being made by a company with strong past ties to Peter Rosa would indicate a high probability that these are the same type of facsimile copies as made by Peter Rosa.

WILLIAMSBURG REPRODUCTIONS: In 1983 the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation decided to market struck copies of the Virginia halfpenny. Hans Birle from the Cornell and Birle Company

was hired to make a master hub from which dies could be produced. Jim Nye from the Adriel Brothers Company was hired to produce the additional minting support materials, such as the stamping head, collars, cut offs, etc. These were all sent to The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation where the actual minting occurred under the direction of Mark Frankel.^{39,40} The first hub was made with the letters "CWF" in relief placed under the shoulder of George III. Fewer than five thousand copies were struck with this design (see Figure 13). Soon after production began, an awareness of the Hobby Protection Act lead to a change in the hub from having "CWF" in relief under George III to "COPY" incused under George III's shoulder (see Figure 14). The planchets were obtained from W. E. Richards and were nearly pure copper. Mark Frankel does not recall any planchets being used which had been previously struck,



Figure 13: A crudely struck facsimile of a Virginia halfpenny made by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation showing, A, an obverse with an improbable head of GEORGE III and the letters CWF in relief below the neck line of George III, B, the reverse which does not match any known Virginia variety and C, the edge showing the uneven thickness of the planchet and the lack of shear lines which would be expected on a genuine Royal Mint product.



Figure 14: A crudely struck facsimile of a Virginia halfpenny made by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation showing, A, an obverse with an improbable head of GEORGE III and the letters "COPY" incused below the neck line of George III, B, the reverse which does not match any known Virginia variety and C, a close up of the NIA of VIRGINIA on the reverse, showing other lettering under the Virginia strike. The authors have not seen an undertype in any other CWF copies.

since the act of striking the planchet during the minting process causes significant hardening of the planchet.³⁹ Therefore, the occurrence of at least one Colonial Williamsburg Foundation copy with an undertype is not readily explained (see Figure 14).

A gross production estimate is that over 500,000 of these Virginia halfpenny copies have been minted, with those having CWF being much less commonly found. Sales of copies decreased somewhat between the years 2002 and 2006 with only some 21,000 being sold.⁴⁰ The devices on these coins are crude enough so that no one should be fooled by the fact that they are reproductions. This is especially emphasized by the presence of either "CWF" or "COPY" under George III's shoulder. In spite of this the authors have seen these copies placed on eBay as authentic Virginia coinage where the telltale "CWF" or "COPY" has been scratched off. Of interest, the dies have broken some four times since production began in Williamsburg and therefore various die states may be found of these replicas. The primary hub was used to produce new dies when needed, accounting for the exact same appearance of each replica.³⁹

An analysis of five of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation replicas reveals that they have a very consistent specific gravity between 8.44 and 8.77 which means the planchets were fairly pure copper (see Table 3). The weights of the coins were all higher than genuine Virginia halfpennies with a range of 122.4 to 148.7 grains and an average weight of 135.8 grains. However, the lowest weight coin, a CWF inscribed copy, did have a weight that was within the upper limits for the genuine Virginia coinage. Similarly, except for the CWF inscribed copy, both the x-axis and y-axis diameters of these replicas fell outside the upper limits of the real Virginia coinage (see Tables 1 and 2). Of interest, though exact die rotation evaluations were not acquired on all the fakes throughout this study, wide variations in the obverse-reverse die axis were noted in these reproductions. As previously mentioned (see Table 1), the Royal Mint products had very consistent coin turn die rotations within concise specifications. Finally, significant variations in the planchet thickness within the same coin were noted (see Figure 13). The best way to determine that one of these coins is a replica is to simply know the look of a genuine Virginia halfpenny (see Figure 1). Comparing the CWF replicas with the real coin points out the obvious differences and should prevent the misidentification of these copies as authentic Virginia coins. The presence of an undertype on one of the replicas with "COPY" inscribed on the obverse (see Figure 14) still remains a mystery and the authors would ask others having these replicas to take a close look at them to see if there are other coins having this unusual finding. **CNL**

CONCLUSION

The 1773 Virginia halfpennies are one of the finest quality colonial coinages minted. Of interest, it seems that no copies of these coins were produced contemporaneously for the purposes of being passed as genuine coins. Many reasons can be found to explain this dearth of counterfeits. However, a number of modern forgeries have been made, most likely since the 1950s. Some of these forgeries are quite deceptive but by using a combination of measurements including weight, diameters, width, specific gravity, die rotation, and occasionally x-ray analysis, as well as close examination, particularly of the edges, most of these forgeries can be recognized. In addition there are a large number of cruder facsimiles having a general appearance of the Virginia coinage from the Royal Mint. A solid understanding of the expected appearance of the Royal Mint Virginia halfpence, in addition to an awareness of how the replicas look, should prevent the modern numismatist from mistaking the two.

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COIN PHOTOGRAPH CREDITS

Figure 1: Genuine 20-N; with permission from the private collection of Roger Moore.

Figure 2: The electrotype shells of the Virginia Penny (variety Newman 1-A); with permission from the private collection of Jeff Rock.

Figure 3: Fake 7-D; with permission from the private collection of Alan Anthony.

Figure 4: Fake 22-S; with permission from the private collection of Alan Anthony.

Figure 5: Fake 23-Q; with permission from the private collection of Roger Moore.

Figure 6: Variety 10-W which is a genuine issue; with permission from the private collection of Roger Moore.

Figure 7: Crude fake Virginia halfpenny; with permission from the private collection of Alan Anthony.

Figure 8: Peter Rosa obverse die used to make his Virginia replicas; with permission from the special die collection of the American Numismatic Society.

Figure 9: Peter Rosa fake with no markings; with permission from the private collection of Roger Moore.

Figure 10: Rosa fake with the word "Becker" on edge; with permission from the private collection of Roger Moore.

Figure 11: Dory Development replica of the "Virginia Penny" with the word "copy" incused on reverse; with permission from the private collection of Roger Moore.

Figure 12: Dory Development replica of the "Virginia Halfpenny" with the word "copy" incused on reverse; with permission from the private collection of Roger Moore.

Figure 13: CWF fake with the letters "CWF" in relief under bust; with permission from the private collection of Roger Moore.

Figure 14: CWF fake with the word "copy" incused below bust and containing an unknown undertype; with permission from the private collection of Roger Moore.

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